



## “The Ephesian Riot”

Acts 19:1-41

Study Guide #22 for the week of  
June 26, 2022

### Paul in Ephesus - Acts 19:1-22

#### Some questions to answer and discuss:

1. Why do you think some people read horoscopes or consult palm readers?
2. What extraordinary events happened during this time? (19:11-16)
3. Why did people both fear and praise Jesus? (19:17)
4. What practices did the Ephesians give up? (19:18-19)
5. What occult practices are popular today?
6. Why did those who practiced magic burn their books publicly?
7. What is one practical way you can oppose Satan’s efforts among the people you know?

#### Life Application Bible Notes

**19:1** Ephesus was the capital and leading business center of the Roman province of Asia (part of present-day Turkey). A hub of sea and land transportation, it ranked with Antioch of Syria and Alexandria in Egypt as one of the great cities on the Mediterranean Sea. Paul stayed in Ephesus for a little over two years. There he wrote his first letter to the Corinthians to counter several problems the church in Corinth was facing. Later, while imprisoned in Rome, Paul wrote a letter to the Ephesian church (the book of Ephesians).

**19:2-4** John's baptism was a sign of repentance from sin only, not a sign of new life in Christ. Like Apollos (18:24-26), these Ephesian believers needed further instruction about the message and ministry of Jesus Christ. They believed in Jesus as the Messiah, but they did not understand the significance of the work of the Holy Spirit. Becoming a Christian involves turning from sin (repentance) and turning to Christ (faith). These believers were incomplete.

In the book of Acts, believers received the Holy Spirit in a variety of ways. Usually the Holy Spirit would fill a person as soon as he or she professed faith in Christ. Here that filling happened later because these disciples' knowledge was incomplete. God was confirming to these believers, who did not initially know about the Holy Spirit, that they were a part of the church. The Holy Spirit's filling endorsed them as believers.

Pentecost was the formal outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the church. The other outpourings in the book of Acts were God's way of uniting new believers to the church. The mark of the true church is not merely right doctrine but right actions, the true evidence of the Holy Spirit's work.

**19:6** When Paul laid his hands on these disciples, they received the Holy Spirit, just as the disciples had at Pentecost, resulting in outward, visible signs of the Holy Spirit's presence. This also had happened when the Holy Spirit had come on the Gentiles (non-Jews, see [10:45-47](#)). Much has been made about this passage and others in Acts that depict believers speaking in tongues. Some have uncomfortably downplayed or dismissed these historical events. Others have tried to duplicate them. Few issues have prompted more argument and confusion or split more churches. We should remember that tongues-speaking is not the central theme of the book of Acts. The point of Luke's history is the faithful communication of the gospel to the ends of the earth. If we want to be doers of the Word ([James 1:22](#)), we will faithfully be involved in the same process of evangelism. Seek to share your faith in the power of the Holy Spirit ([1:8](#)) and leave it up to God to give you whatever experiences he thinks you need.

Map: Paul Takes a Third Journey

***Paul Takes a Third Journey:** What prompted Paul's third journey may have been the need to correct any misunderstandings in the churches Paul had planted. So he hurried north, then west, returning to many of the cities he had previously visited. This time, however, he stayed on a more direct westward route toward Ephesus.*

**19:9** Paul spoke in a lecture hall at this school. Such halls were used in the morning for teaching philosophy, but they were empty during the hot part of the day (about 11 am to 4 pm). Because many people did not work during those hours, they would come to hear Paul's preaching.

**19:10** "The province of Asia" refers to Asia Minor or modern-day Turkey. During this time, Paul and his coworkers spread the Good News throughout the land.

**19:13** These Jews traveled from town to town making a living by claiming to heal people and drive out demons. Often they would recite a whole list of names in their incantation to be sure of including the right deity. Here they were trying to use Jesus' name in an effort to match Paul's power.

**19:13-16** Some Ephesians engaged in exorcism and occult practices for profit (see [19:18, 19](#)). The sons of Sceva were impressed by Paul, whose power to drive out demons came from God's Holy Spirit, not from witchcraft, and was obviously more powerful than theirs. They discovered, however, that no one can control or duplicate God's power. These men were calling on the name of Jesus without knowing him personally. The power to change people comes from Christ. It cannot be tapped by reciting his name like a magic charm. God works his power only through those he chooses.

**19:18, 19** Ephesus was a center for black magic and other occult practices. The people cooked up magical formulas to give them wealth, happiness, and success in marriage. Superstition and sorcery were commonplace. God clearly forbids such practices ([Deuteronomy 18:9-13](#)). You cannot be a believer and hold on to the occult, black magic, or sorcery. Once you begin to dabble in these areas, you may become obsessed by them because Satan is very powerful. But God's power is even greater ([1 John 4:4](#); [Revelation 20:10](#)). If you are mixed up in the occult, learn a lesson from the Ephesians and get rid of anything that could trap you in such practices.

**19:21** Why did Paul say he had to go to Rome? Wherever he went, he could see Rome's influence. Paul wanted to take the message of Christ to the world's center of influence and power.

**19:22** Paul later wrote letters to Timothy: the books of 1 and 2 Timothy. Erastus was a committed follower of Christ who was not only Paul's helpful assistant but also Corinth's city treasurer (see Romans 16:23).

### **The Riot in Ephesus - Acts 19:23-41**

#### **Some questions to answer and discuss:**

1. If you were given a lot of money to spend, what would you buy?
2. Who was the ringleader against Paul and the Christians? (19:24)
3. On what basis did Artemis make a case against those of the Way? (19:25-27)
4. Why did the silversmith's talk create such an uproar? (19:27-29)
5. In what ways can money become more important to us than it should?
6. How can we show our trust in God as provider?
7. What is one way you can trust God with your money this week?

#### **Life Application Bible Notes**

**19:23** "The Way" refers to those who followed the way of Christ—the Christians.

**19:24** Artemis was a goddess of fertility. She was represented by a carved female figure with many breasts. A large statue of Artemis (which was said to have come from heaven, 19:35) was in the great temple at Ephesus. That temple was one of the wonders of the ancient world. The festival of Artemis involved wild orgies and carousing. Obviously the religious and commercial life of Ephesus reflected the city's worship of this pagan deity.

**19:25-27** When Paul preached in Ephesus, Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen did not quarrel with his doctrine. Their anger boiled because his preaching threatened their profits. They made silver shrines of the Ephesian goddess Artemis. The craftsmen knew that if people started believing in God and discarding the idols, their livelihood would suffer.

**19:27** Demetrius's strategy for stirring up a riot was to appeal to his fellow workmen's love of money and then to encourage them to hide their greed behind the mask of patriotism and religious loyalty. The rioters couldn't see the selfish motives for their rioting; instead, they saw themselves as heroes for the sake of their land and beliefs.

**19:29-31** Paul often sought others to help him in his work. On this occasion, his traveling companions were Aristarchus (who would accompany him on other journeys; see 20:3, 4 and 27:1, 2), and Gaius (probably not the same Gaius mentioned in Romans 16:23 and 1 Corinthians 1:14). Paul wanted to go to the amphitheater to defend his companions, but the other believers wouldn't let him go, fearing for his safety. The officials who begged him not to risk his life were government officials responsible for the religious and political order of the region. Paul's message had reached all levels of society, crossing all social barriers and giving Paul friends in high places.

**19:33, 34** The mob had become anti-Jewish as well as anti-Christian. This Alexander may have been pushed forward by the Jews as a spokesman to explain that the Jews had no part in the Christian community and thus were not involved in the economic problem of the silversmiths.

**19:40** The city of Ephesus was under the domination of the Roman Empire. The main responsibility of the local city leaders was simply to maintain peace and order. If they failed to control the people, Rome would remove the appointed officials from office. The entire town could also be put under martial law, taking away many civic freedoms.

***Through Macedonia and Achaia:** A riot in Ephesus sent Paul to Troas, then through Macedonia to the region of Achaia. In Achaia he went to Corinth to deal with problems there. Paul had planned to sail from Corinth straight to Antioch of Syria, but a plot against his life was discovered. So he retraced his steps through Macedonia.*

**19:41** The riot in Ephesus convinced Paul that it was time to move on. But it also showed that the law still provided some protection for Christians as they challenged the worship of the goddess Artemis and the most idolatrous religion in Asia.

*Acts Study Guide questions and notes are from*

